

## Living space needs and the child

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**Address:** Great Zimbabwe University, PO Box 1235 Masvingo Zimbabwe.

**Abstract:** *The purpose of the study was to investigate the living space needs and the child. The study was conducted in a section of a high density suburb in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. A qualitative study utilising a descriptive survey was used. The researcher used a population of a hundred households. Twenty households were sampled using purposive sampling. The housing officers were also purposively sampled. Data was generated through interviews, and observation. The data was presented and analysed in narrative form according to the themes which emerged on each research question. It was established by the study that outside living space needs were compromised by closeness of stands. Children did not have adequate space for play and recreation. It was also established through this study that most households were overcrowded and this compromised inside living space needs. Lack of space and privacy compromised the quality of school work i.e. study and home work. The study indicated that overcrowding could expose children to immoral practices resulting in poor social development. Overcrowding was seen as contributing to sewage bursts and improper refuse disposal resulting in a health hazard. The study recommends that the city council allocate residential stands which adequately cater for the living space needs of families. The other recommendation is that the municipal authorities should provide public recreational facilities to promote all round child development. There is also need for public awareness on the impact of overcrowding on the upbringing of children.*

**KEY WORDS:** Living space, living space needs, outside living space, inside living space.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Having somewhere to live helps in maintaining psychological value, mental health and happiness (Baldwin, 1990). Therefore it was essential to investigate living space needs of families in the selected high density suburb in Masvingo Zimbabwe. For a child to develop into a normal, balanced human being there is need for shelter. Shelter falls under the basic needs under Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Zindi & Makotore, 2000). A home with adequate inside and outside living space would contribute to balanced child development. An ideal home promotes good mental health, and physical health. Inadequate outside and inside living space does not augur well with the human needs of security, privacy and self- actualisation. Unfulfilled psychological needs of shelter may cause psychological problems to individuals.

### II. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The study assessed the accommodation of both outside and inside living space needs of inhabitants in the area under investigation. This was in order to bring out possible ways of improving the use of living space for the benefit of the child. The purpose of the study was to find out whether the outside and inside living space in the households of the suburbs under investigation were supportive of children's living space needs, the objective of the study was to determine whether the outside and inside living space was conducive to total child development in terms of social, physical and psychological development.

### **III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Socialisation**

Socialisation is the process individuals learn the culture of their society. It involves primary and secondary socialisation. Haralambos and Holborn (2008) and Giddens (2006) define socialization as the process by which individuals learn the culture of their society. Socialisation is the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture in which he or she was born (Giddens, 2006).

Socialisation teaches members of society the norms which govern their behaviour. Socialisation is the primary channel for the transmission of culture over time and generations (Giddens 2006). Through socialisation members of society learn the culture and norms of their society. The norms provide guidelines on acceptable behaviour. Culture and norms vary from society to society, culture and norms also change. Giddens (2006) says socialisation is a lifelong process in which human behaviour is continually shaped by social interaction (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008).

#### **3.2 Types of Socialisation**

Socialisation is an important aspect as it teaches individuals acceptable forms of behaviour for their culture. . There are two types of socialisation an individual undergoes primary socialisation and secondary socialisation. Agents of primary socialisation are members of the family. Secondary socialisation takes place later in childhood and into adulthood. Through social interaction in these contexts the individual learns values, norms, beliefs of his or her culture. Through socialisation the individual develops a sense of self.

##### **3.2.1 Primary socialisation**

Primary socialisation occurs in infancy and childhood within the family (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008; Giddens, 2006). Primary socialisation is seen as important in helping to shape human beings. This is considered the most intense and important period of cultural learning. It is the time when a child learns language and basic behavioural patterns which form a foundation for learning in later life. The family is the main agent of primary socialisation. It's in the family that the child learns many of the basic behaviour patterns of its society (Haralambos & Holborn 2008). During primary socialisation the child learns acceptable values and norms in his society. Parents, siblings socialise the child into society's expectations in terms of behaviour.

##### **3.2.2 Secondary Socialisation**

This form of socialisation takes place later in childhood and into adulthood. At this stage, other agents of socialisation take over some of the responsibilities of the family. These agents include the educational system, religion, the mass media organisations, the occupational group and the peer groups (Giddens, 2006; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). Education religion and mass media are amongst the most important agents of secondary socialisation also important are peer groups. Peer groups are groups of people with similar status for example groups of friends, school children in the same year, or colleagues in the same job.

#### **3.3 Socialisation agents and peer groups**

Socialisation agents like parents; teachers have a responsibility for preparing children for membership in society. Socialisation places limits on children's actions. Socialisation agents from different backgrounds tend to bring up children differently. This means all children are not raised with identical norms and values. Handel (2006). says a child is not only born into society but rather into a particular location in society, a social class, an ethnic, group, and type of neighbourhood. The socialisation agents in different social segments present different expectations to children, who will, accordingly have different, socialisation experiences (Handel, 2006).

Socialisation is a highly predictive, conservative process, which maintains the status quo by passing down a shared relatively stable culture from generation to generation. Socialisation provides people with common goals, teaches them the appropriate behaviour and allows them to learn the rules of social life. The family is the most important agent of socialisation. Socialisation facilitates the development of the self. The development of the self is crucial because it enables a child to start to align his behaviour with that of others.

#### **IV. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Shelter is one of the most important needs of an individual according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Zindi and Makotore 2000). Every individual needs living space in order to maintain good physical and mental health. A house is a building that serves as living quarters for one or a few families (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). A house ranges from a simple dwelling such as rudimentary huts to complex structures. Baldwin (1990) says that the size of a dwelling should suit the number of dependents to avoid over crowding. With more people in the family there is need for more space for various needs. There is need for more bedroom space for an expanding family. Increase of hobbies and activities triggers some special space needs.

Living space needs refer to housing requirements in relation to space available (Baldwin, 1990). This involves provision of housing of suitable size and usable floor area to satisfy human requirements for: health, safety, family living (bathing, feeding), privacy, rest and domestic activities, recreational and social activities. Living space is made up of outside and inside living space. A home with adequate inside and outside living space provides for good mental and physical health. A normal home should provide adequate space to cater for normal household activities by family members. A home should provide space for recreation, work areas, relaxation areas, and sleeping space.

##### **3.1 Outside living space**

Model building by laws (1977) says that the national standard in Zimbabwe for the high density suburbs ranges from 200m<sup>2</sup> -312m<sup>2</sup>. The distance between the houses should be 4,5m on the sides, 3m on the front and 2m at the back. The outside should have sufficient open space for passive recreation and aesthetically pleasing environment. Hendrickson, (1994) says the outside living space should have 3 zones which are public, service and private. i) Public zones are normally in front of the house exposed to the public. ii) The service zone is used for necessary services e.g. driveways, sidewalks, and storage. iii) The private zone is mainly hidden from the public and provides space for recreation and relaxation for the family.

##### **3.2 Inside living space**

Indoor space requirements depend on the location, culture, social and economic status of the population involved (Van Wyk and Elangsen 1997). Size and number of rooms should accommodate the social and physical needs of a household. In normal circumstances the house should provide for a kitchen, dining, 1 main and 2 or more spare bedrooms. Each room should be used for its own purpose to avoid compromising living space needs. Modern Building By-Laws (1977) indicate that a habitable room must be 7m<sup>2</sup> where each individual is allocated 3m<sup>2</sup>. It means only two people can occupy a 7 m<sup>2</sup> room. The Modern Building By-laws, stipulates that 5-7 people can occupy a house under normal circumstances. A home should provide proper ventilation, rest, sleep and social interaction. Aspects of poor housing like, over crowding, noise, air pollution, bad arduours and dampness give rise to dissatisfaction with housing and may contribute to poor health (Lewis, 1996).

Hendrickson, (1994) says the inside living space should have 3 zones which are public, work and private. Public zone is normally the living room where visitors are received and entertained, where the family relaxes and socialises. The work zone is used for necessary services e.g. cooking, laundry, sewing, studying. The private zone is mainly hidden from the public and provides space for resting and sleeping e.g. bedrooms.

##### **3.3 Living space and privacy**

Lewis (1996) says people need privacy to maintain good mental health. Adequate space ensures privacy. Proper housing should provide sufficient space between houses to avoid infringing upon privacy. Each family member ought to have his or her own private space e.g. a bedroom.

##### **3.4 Living space and human health and security**

Inadequate living space, may affect human health and security. Spread of infectious diseases is high in densely populated areas (Chenje et al 1998). A large concentration of people generates huge values of waste which may create a health hazard. Poor housing can affect physical health by facilitating the spread of

communicable diseases (Baldwin, 1990). Too many people per household speeds the spread disease. Children need enclosed play space near their home. This ensures that they play under supervision and are safe.

### **3.5 Living space and Moral values**

There is a link between living space needs and human behaviour and moral development. Adoption of different cultures and behaviours may occur where more than one family share the same house. This living arrangement may make child control and discipline difficult because child rearing practices differ among families. Parents bring up their children in three different ways the authoritarian, democratic or authoritative and permissive or indulgent (Morin, 2016; Halpenny, Nixon, and Watson, 2010). A permissive parent is very flexible, relaxed very accepting and also very accommodative (Morin, 2016). Baumrind (1991), & Morin, (2016) view an authoritarian parent as one who is rigid and values unquestioning obedience from the children. Morin (2016) says the democratic is whereby parents and their adolescent children participate in decision making. Upbringing of children under any of these practices has influence on their behaviour.

## **V. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Research approach and design**

The descriptive qualitative survey was used in this research in order to study the phenomenon in its natural setting. The qualitative research describes and qualifies human experiences through the written and/or spoken language (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This was in order to understand living space needs through direct interactions with the research participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The descriptive survey research design is an investigation technique which concentrates on describing and interpreting the existing phenomenon. A descriptive survey is a systematic description of salient aspects of phenomenon, object or situation with a focus on the patterns that emerge. The researcher used the descriptive survey because it allowed the researcher to collect data on the living space needs of families in Masvingo urban high density suburb.

### **4.2 Population and Sampling**

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) define a population as a well defined group of human beings or entities. In this research, the population of study comprised 100 households. The study made use of a sample of 20 households and 2 council personnel. Purposive sampling was used for the council personnel. Houses to be studied were purposively sampled to include houses which housed one family and those with 2 or more families.

### **4.3 Data Collection Methods**

Mutch (2005) & Punch (2009) say typical methods of data generation in the qualitative studies include interviews, observation and document analysis. Data were collected through interviews, and observation. Qualitative research uses a variety of data generation tools to achieve trustworthiness (Maree, 2008; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

#### **4.3.1 Interview**

The researcher interviewed the householders to establish their understanding of living space needs. The interview involved direct, personal contact with the participants (Punch, 2009). Through direct contact, the researchers gathered data on what the respondent's value, think, like and feel about the living space provision in their homes. Semi structured interviews were used to give room for probing and provide respondents with the opportunity to express themselves.

#### **4.3.2 Observations**

Best & Khan, (2006), Marshall & Rossman (2006) consider observation as a foundational tool for all qualitative research. Observation entails a systematic description of events, behaviour and activities in the social setting selected for study as seen by the researcher (Marshall and Rossman 1989). The observation method assisted the researcher to acquire first hand information on the living space needs of the population under investigation (Spindler & Spindler, 1992).

#### 4.4 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher first of all visited the households in order to familiarise with the types of housing set ups. This was to facilitate sample selection. The second visit and the subsequent visits were to interview and to observe living space provisions of families.

### VI. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Data were presented, analysed and discussed in narrative form basing on the themes which emerged.

#### 5.1 Living space and privacy

The area investigated being a high density suburb has housing units which are close, resulting in more people in a limited space (Baldwin 1990). The households which were part of the study have limited outside space. The outside zones are generally small resulting in houses being quite close impinging on privacy. Privacy is a problem especially where there are no walls or durawalls separating housing units. In some cases the public zone was so small that people walking along the roads could see what will be going on in the houses. One householder interviewed said “Our houses are so close that we can hear people talking in other houses. You have to lower your voice so that the neighbours do not listen to your conversation”. Some residents felt that the responsible authority could compensate for limited space by providing recreational facilities like parks and halls for children and adults to use.

Results of the investigations indicated that most of the housing units accommodated more people than the number recommended in the by laws.

**Table 1: Families per housing unit**

No of Families	1	2	3	4	Total
Households	8	4	5	3	20

**Table 2: People per housing Unit.**

No of people	3-7	8-10	11-15	16-	Total
Households	9	4	5	1	19

The contributory factor to overcrowding in some of the housing units, was having more than one family accommodated in each housing unit. The building by-laws (1977) stipulate that an average house should be occupied by 5-7 people. Inside the housing units some of the houses had all the three inside living space zones provided for namely private, public and work. This was the case in houses occupied by one family. Family members enjoyed privacy because they had bedrooms which were shared by at most 2 people as stipulated in the by laws (Model Building By-Laws 1977). However in the case of houses with more than one family, it was difficult for families to cater for the three inside living space zones. There was no privacy because in some cases 3 families lived in one house. In some housing units there were 14 people. More than 2 people were sharing a room. In some cases children shared sleeping quarters with parents, a family in some cases used one room that is parents and children using a bedsitter. Such a scenario compromised living space needs. According to the building by-laws, a habitable room of 7m<sup>2</sup> should accommodate 2 people (Model Building By-Laws, 1977). Many large families could not afford this lifestyle. Noises usually associated with crowding affect people mentally e.g. high density, low density – small families – large families. Houses in the high density suburbs are close together making privacy a problem. If a family has an argument their neighbours would know about it.

Children can be exposed to obscene practices due to overcrowding. Children may develop bad mental pictures/behaviour at an early age. Sometimes children of different sexes shared a bedroom or children shared a bedroom with parents due to limited space for living or inadequate income. Such arrangements may lead to child abuse. Where there are limitations of space, at least there should be a bedroom for boys and one for girls. Each family member should have his or her own private place for example bedroom where possible. Many large families cannot afford privacy due to community life style. This is usually experienced in African families where you might find that children share a bedroom with a grandparent. In this case privacy was restricted for the children and grandparents. Some houses with two or more families resulted in dual purpose rooms where

one room acted as a sitting room, dining room, kitchen and bedroom for the children. The room would be divided by furniture or curtains. In this case, the adults and children's privacy was compromised.

## **5.2 Living space and human health and security**

Most of the Housing units studied had more people than they were designed to carry. In turn this affected the sewer system as its carrying capacity was exceeded and this resulted in sewerage bursts. Through the interviews it was established that sewer bursts were a common occurrence in some areas. The housing officer interviewed revealed that "Sewage bursts occur because carrying capacity is exceeded. There is more waste to be disposed than should be the case because some housing units have much more people than is recommended".

One householder interviewed said "Under the conditions we are living of 16 people in this house, if there is an outbreak of a disease, we will all perish because the infection will spread fast". This is supported by Chenje et al (1998), and Baldwin (1990) by indicating that overcrowding speeds the spread of diseases. Overcrowded living conditions noted could also contribute to poor health due to excess noise from both interior and exterior sources. Children need a peaceful environment to have adequate rest and do their homework and study. A noisy environment can have a negative effect on children's concentration and effectiveness in doing their school work. One child interviewed said "I wish there were not too many people in the house. There is so much noise and activity. I find it difficult to study, the noise gives me stress". Overcrowding can result in mental illness (Lewis, 1996).

The house should be free from excessive noise from both interior and exterior sources. A home is a place of refuge from the rigors of work, school and other activities. It is a place of recovery from sickness, ill health, fatigue. Therefore the need for peaceful sufficient indoor space cannot be over emphasised. Too much noise both inside and outside the house can be distressing, cause headaches and stress, reduce concentration and interferes with sleep.

## **5.3 Living space and moral values**

From the investigations, most sampled housing units accommodated more than one family. The scenario may contribute towards poor moral and social development in children. One parent living in a house where there were 3 other families said "I am having problems controlling my 13 year old child because he is influenced by the behaviour of the children in the house". Another parent in the shared accommodation said "The other parents do not monitor what their children do and this makes it difficult to enforce rules on my children e.g. what time they should be at home". Child rearing practices differ some are authoritarian, others lazes faire (Baumrind, 1991; Morin, 2016; Halpenny et al, 2010)

Shared accommodation tends to affect child rearing e.g. boys sharing with girls regardless of age, parents sharing sleeping quarters with children. Moral decay may occur when children share sleeping quarters with parents because they may be exposed to sexual practices at an early age since privacy is compromised. Small boys sharing sleeping quarters with bigger boys may be exposed to sexual abuse (sodomy).

The following was generally reflected in the study; adoption of different cultures and behaviours may occur where more than one family shared the same house. This living arrangement may make child control and discipline difficult because child rearing practices differ among families. Infidelity and promiscuity tends to flourish in situations where there is limited space and where sharing is common.

## **VII. CONCLUSIONS**

The study established that closeness of stands and having too many families in one housing unit compromised privacy for individuals living in the house this was due to limited outside and inside living space. Lack of space affects children's ability to do school work. From the findings it may be concluded that human health and security are compromised by overcrowding. This is so because there is pressure on resources e.g. sewer facilities which are strained may result in sewer bursts. The other conclusion is that living space needs provision influence human behaviour and moral development. In households with more than one family and too many people moral decay can occur and children's behaviour can be negatively affected.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends.

- That the council provides recreational facilities for children e.g. parks with swings, slides, jungle gyms, all purpose halls and libraries. This would provide for play and recreation.
- That the council discourages residents from over leasing.
- Council to provide bigger stands to avoid overcrowding and provide more outside living space per household.
- Development of public awareness on the impact of overcrowding.

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